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Abstract

This is a review of Geoffrey Blainey's *Triumph of the Nomads, a History of Aboriginal Australia* (1976).

Disciplines

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tion in a Bolivian town, despite truly radical changes in social structure. Using simple diagrams to illustrate his analyses, Heath describes the changes in patron-client networks for curing, land, justice, public works, and marketing.

Robert Shirley, in the context of greater economic development, traces the process and patterning of patronage in the large system of cooperatives in São Paulo State.

Esther Hermitte, an Argentine investigator, breaks new ground, relating a network of women in patron-client relationship. They are the weavers and local marketers of vicuña and llama ponchos, the only cash products in an otherwise subsistence farming valley on the eastern slopes of the Andes. Only women weave, and they guard the privileges connected with this occupation, supporting the definition of male weavers as homosexual. Males without land or other occupation, then, generally do nothing or take migratory work outside the region, reinforcing the womens' hold on the only local industry.

Breaking even "newer ground," Nancie Gonzalez enters the realm of patron-client relations at the international level. She summarizes the economic and political in-

terdependence of the Dominican Republic (client) and the United States (patron) over the past hundred years. Basically the relation involves a powerful oligarchy, the elite in many areas of national life in the Republic, and its position in the disbursement of valuable resources—notably, foreign aid.

Gonzalez' paper should be read—it may inspire more research into the workings of personalized—"formal" relations among those doing business at the international level. To date, the expertise of the heads of even the largest U.S. corporations does not extend to competently handling the "grey areas," the interstices in world markets. Personalized dealings, often with a patron-client component, are frequently identified in the popular press with graft, corruption, and bribery. However, it seems that dishonesty, as such, is possible in any human system, rationally formalized or not. Perhaps for the foreseeable future Americans will need to learn how to work ethically within patron-client-like systems. Anthropologists can surely make a key contribution, toward this end, for which *Structure and Process in Latin America* can serve as a good beginning.

Triumph of the Nomads, A History of Aboriginal Australia. GEOFFREY BLAINEY. Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1976, 285 pp., \$15.00, (cloth).

Reviewed by BRIAN SPOONER
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The first thing that must be said about *Triumph of the Nomads* is that the title is misleading. And in case it should be said that the subtitle obviates any misunderstanding—that too is unsatisfactory. For, this book is not a history, and it narrates no triumph.

The "nomads" of the title are the sum total of Australian aborigines who lived up

to the time of contact, and their triumph is presumably over the natural conditions of the island-continent (though this is not explained). The book provides a wide ranging popular survey of the evidence for human activity in Australia before contact and the ideas that have been advanced to interpret it. Among the subjects covered are abortion, infanticide, geronticide, epi-

demics, the use of fire, migration, earlier contacts, fighting, hunting, the ecology of large gatherings, and food storage. At a certain rather low level, therefore, the book may be considered useful because of the amount of information it puts together in a single volume.

On the negative side, however, it must be said that the book is exclusively concerned with archaeological and geomorphological evidence and has almost nothing on ideas—ideology, social organization, the dreaming, etc.—which most would consider important evidence in any case for a triumph. Further, the author is too fond of irrelevant analogy and inapposite metaphor. For example, “the first intercontinental missile was probably a spear or stone, which happened to be thrown in those months when the Americas and Asia were narrowly parted at high tide” (p. 9); or, on the use of fire, “Perhaps never in the history of mankind was there a people who could answer

with such unanimity the question: ‘have you got a light, mate?’ ” (p. 76); and “Some of the species of giant marsupials might have been partly the victims of fire—not fierce naked fire but a slow combustion of factors. . . .” (p. 82). These are not isolated examples. They represent the type of explanation the author adds to the evidence and ideas he has gleaned from anthropologists. In fact, this sort of comment tends to appear where one would have hoped for anthropological discussion of the evidence. He is, nevertheless, anxious to let the reader know that his facts come from anthropologically reputable sources. Unfortunately, his form of referencing resembles what in other circles would be called name dropping. Finally, more careful editing would have eliminated the odd solecism such as “an irrelevant criteria” (p. 217).

In sum, it is difficult to recommend this book for any audience.